

appeal to an initial denial must be made within twenty working days after receipt of an FOIA appeal; or for a PA appeal, within thirty working days. Time limits are mandatory for an FOIA request, but are permissive for a PA request. Except for unusual circumstances, failure to make a determination within the stated time limits means that a requester has exhausted the administrative remedies and may bring suit immediately.

(c) Persons who request information under the provisions of these Acts, and whose requests are denied on appeal, may petition the courts to enjoin the Department of Commerce from withholding the record and, in this event, burden is on the Department of Commerce to sustain its actions.

(d) To assure that PA/FOIA requests involving classified records are subjected to a thorough classification review and that a response is made within the specified time limits, the procedures in paragraphs (e) and (f) shall apply as well as those of DAO 205-12 "Public Information," DAO 205-14 "Processing Requests Under the Freedom of Information Act," and DAO 205-15 "Implementing the Privacy Act of 1974."

(e) Initial requests involving classified records:

(1) The office determined to have primary interest shall conduct a declassification review of the information as prescribed in § 4a.8(b) (2), (3), and (4).

(2) If the information is subsequently declassified, the action office shall consult with the Office of the Assistant General Counsel for Administration to determine releasability with consideration only for the legality of release within the purview of PA/FOIA.

(3) If the record warrants continued classification, the action office shall coordinate with the Office of the Assistant General Counsel for Administration and so advise the requester, and further advise the requester of the right of appeal.

(4) If the classification review cannot be completed within the prescribed time limit, due to unusual circumstances, the action office shall advise the requester. An extension of time shall be arranged in accordance

with the FOIA and implementing Commerce PA/FOIA rules.

(f) Receipt of an appeal for reconsideration of denial of a classified record under PA/FOIA: Appeals under this section shall be addressed to the General Counsel who shall refer the record(s) to the Director, Office of Security, for a declassification review. The Director may overrule previous determinations in whole or in part when, in his judgment, continued protection in the interest of national security is no longer required. If the information under review no longer requires classification, it shall be declassified. The Director shall advise the General Counsel of his decision.

§ 4a.10 Presidential information.

Information originated by the President, by the White House Staff, by committees, commissions, or boards appointed by the President, or by others specifically providing advice and counsel to a President or acting on behalf of a President is exempted from the provisions of mandatory review for declassification, except as consistent with applicable laws that pertain to presidential papers or records.

§ 4a.11 Foreign government information.

Requests for mandatory review for declassification of foreign government information shall be processed as prescribed in § 4a.8(b). Consultation with the foreign source of the information through appropriate channels may be required prior to final action on the request.

§ 4a.12 Public availability of declassified information.

A fundamental policy of the Department of Commerce is to make information available to the public to the maximum extent permitted by law. Information which is declassified, for any reason, loses its protective status in the interest of national security. Accordingly, declassified information shall be handled in every respect on the same basis as all other unclassified information.